

NDEAM 2018

Celebrating 70 Years
And Saying Thank You



GEORGIA VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION AGENCY

October 2018

Contents

Page 3 — Executive Director Sean T. Casey on NDEAM

Page 4 — Things to Remember About NDEAM 2018

Page 5 — Tifton NDEAM Proclamation

Page 6 — Calling for New Ideas

Page 6 — Job Seeker of the Month

Page 7 — Get to Know a Legislator

Page 8 — Calendar of Events

Page 9 — Telling Their Story

Page 10 — Employment Services Member Hits the Books

Page 11 — Leadership Summit Rescheduled

Page 11 — Dog Days

Page 12 — Embracing Pre-ETS

Page 13 — DAS Employee of the Month

Page 14 — GLASS Open House

Page 15 — Seeing the Sign

Page 16 and 17 — Atlanta's Community Conversation

Page 18 and 19 — Craig Camuso Gets Sworn In



Conversations Worth Having

By Executive Director Sean T. Casey



Sometimes the conversations most needed in the workplace are the ones you most dread having. People by nature are change-resistant, so rolling out new policies can be difficult. Nobody particularly relishes the

performance review process (whether boss or employee), even when the feedback is positive. And asking for a raise or promotion is one of the most anxiety-inspiring conversations in the office playbook.

Particularly in the realm of workplace dialogue, disability-related issues are laden with uncertainty and inherent discomfort. By now, we've been having conversations for a few decades regarding gender, ethnicity and race. That there's still much work to be done in those areas is undeniable; however, the disability discussion is even less charted territory. We are, after all, only 28 years removed from the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, with some individuals still in the workforce who remember a time before its existence.

However, at Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), we're in the business of having conversations others might consider awkward. Our mission is employment, independence and empowerment for people who have disabilities. To work effectively with our clients, the kind of subjects that make many people run for the hills are a part of a daily life. Those of you who are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRCs) or other field professionals must get to know people extremely well in order to write Individualized Plans for Employment that are far more than government-issued pieces of paper. It's not

uncommon for clients to tell you about professional rejections, childhood experiences, and living situations, as well as the actual physical and emotional realities surrounding their disabilities. Conversations are personal, raw, sometimes humorous, and sometimes painful.

As part of October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), we're intentionally starting conversations about subjects that society tends to politely avoid for fear of making someone uncomfortable. GVRA is working with our disability community partners to organize Community Conversations – relaxed gatherings in which panels participate in discussions about a number of topics that matter to people who have disabilities, their families, and their employers. We believe that, the more openly we discuss differences, the more we realize those differences are what help us bring valuable insights to the workforce.

I hope each of you will make plans to attend an event in your area.

Augusta – October 15 – 5pm
Augusta University College of Allied Health Sciences
987 Sebastian Way, Augusta, GA 30912

Savannah – October 19 – 1pm
EmployAbility
1249 Eisenhower Dr., Savannah, GA 31406

Columbus – October 23 – 12pm
Columbus State University
4225 University Ave., Columbus, GA 31907

Register at: bit.ly/CommunityConvos

Sean T. Casey
Executive Director



NDEAM 2018

Things to Remember

As Executive Director Sean Casey noted previously in this newsletter, October marks the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and this year, there are more ways than ever to celebrate.

Reflecting a commitment to a robust and competitive American labor force, the 2018 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme is "America's Workforce: Empowering All." This is something worth sharing! We encourage everyone to get the word out on social media. Share the NDEAM 2018 poster (see below). Encourage your local government to draft a proclamation about the significance of the month. Learn how to prepare materials both online and in print that are as accessible as possible. And that's not all!

You can also organize discussions in your local community, encouraging folks to learn about the challenges faced by the disability community and how they can be more active in it. In addition, you can reach out to local media who may not be aware of the significance of this month. Join a business organization to help spread the message about why hiring individuals with disabilities is good business practice, and encourage your employers HR department to proactively recruit individuals with disabilities. The list goes on and on, and it doesn't need to stop after Halloween.

For a full list of ideas of how you can participate, head on over to <https://mailchi.mp/gvs.ga.gov/celebrate-ndeam-with-gvra>.



AMERICA'S WORKFORCE:

EMPOWERING ALL

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

 OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

#NDEAM | dol.gov/odep



The Tifton Mayor and City Council recently penned a proclamation recognizing October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Marketing Manager Patrice Meadows and Legislative Liaison Charlie Miller were on hand to accept the proclamation.



Keep Those New Ideas Coming

We Want to Hear From You!

The GVRA Office of Strategy and Innovation still wants to hear from staff about how GVRA can improve or enhance customer service, productivity or staff morale

To let their voice be heard, coworkers are encouraged to fill out the previously-distributed GVRA New Idea Worksheet with as much detail as possible and email it to InnovationExchangeSI@gvs.ga.gov. This Worksheet will remain anonymous to everyone except Strategy and Innovation staff. Staff members can email the address above to request a new worksheet.

Once an idea has been received and reviewed, an ad hoc panel of three individuals from the relevant program area will determine if the idea improves or enhances customer service, productivity or staff morale.

As the idea moves through the process, those who submitted the idea will receive an email from OSI indicating the status of the idea.

The OSI will track all idea submissions on a monthly basis.

Seeking and Finding

Introducing “Job Seeker of the Month”

We are thrilled to unveil an initiative designed to highlight the skills of your clients and help them leverage their talents as they job search.

The Job Seeker of the Month project is an ongoing multiplatform campaign driven by the field staff. Each month, the Office of Communications and Marketing will ask you to nominate Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) or Cave Spring Center (CSC) clients/students whom you believe will be ready to work and actively job searching within six months. Here are the steps to submit a nomination:

Staff are encouraged to complete the form sent to them previously with their client's consent.

Return the form to Robin Folsom in the

Office of Communications and Marketing at Communications@gvs.ga.gov with 'Job Seeker of the Month' in the Subject Line.

Please submit November nominations no later than close of business Friday, October 19th.

Staff will be notified if their client is selected. A Communications staff member will then make contact with the individual and request a headshot on a white background, in business attire. On the first of each month, Job Seeker bios will be posted to the gvs.ga.gov homepage and featured on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

So check back often to see which of our clients is job ready and eager to get out into the working world!

Get to Know a Legislator

This Month We Feature John Carson



John has 18 years of Georgia public education, including an undergraduate in Accounting from Georgia State University, and a master's in Finance from Kennesaw State University. He is a CPA and is employed with Monarch Private Capital. John was previously employed with KPMG (Atlanta, London and New York), GE Capital and SunTrust.

John belongs to the following civic/professional organizations: Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Cherokee Chamber of Commerce, Kennesaw State University Political Science Advisory Board, Anna Crawford Children's Center and the Georgia Society of CPAs.

In addition, he has also been associated with: Boy Scouts of America (Eagle Scout), Cobb County Commission for Children and Youth (Treasurer, member of Executive Committee), MUST Ministries, Rotary International, YoungLife, Alpha Ministries and the Kennesaw State University Graduate Student Association (Past President).

John Carson was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in the October 2011 Special Election run-off. He represents the 46th District, which includes northeast Cobb and southeast Cherokee Counties.

An Atlanta native, John Carson was raised in a family that encouraged conservative values, the importance of education, and an excellent work ethic. John's late father was an engineer for Georgia Power and a small business owner.

His mother raised three sons and worked in counseling roles at charitable organizations. In addition, both of John's grandfathers were middle Georgia farmers.

John and his wife Beverly have been married since 2005 and have two children. Their family attends Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, and previously attended Mount Paran North Church of God for over ten years.



Start Now.

Call the GIB Referral Hotline.

1.888.226.3444

Calendar of Events

Save the Date

GVRA Community Conversations

Throughout the Month of October
See Page 3 for Full Details

GAB Annual Conference

October 19 through October 21
The Westin Harbor Resort
1 Resort Drive
Savannah, GA

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting

October 24 through October 25
Holiday Inn Valdosta Conference Center
1805 West Hill Avenue
Valdosta, GA

The Arc's National Convention 2018

November 8 through November 10
Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center
2800 Opryland Drive
Nashville, TN

Supported Decision-Making Symposium

November 16
Macon, GA
Location TBD

GVRA Leadership Summit

November 26 through November 28
The Westin Harbor Resort
1 Resort Drive
Savannah, GA



Finding Success

How Several Clients Found Jobs

By Communications Specialist Tom Connelly

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency continues its mission to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to obtain gainful employment. Christopher Daniels and Victoria Towery serve as two examples of the positive results that can be produced when the agency becomes involved with these individuals.

Christopher, from Albany, became a client of VR because he needed assistance finding a job. His counselor, Sondra Hudson, CRC, provided him with numerous services to make sure he was successful in this endeavor.

Included in the services he received are job readiness training, assessment services, diagnosis and treatment of impairments, client support services, rehabilitation technology services, job placement assistance, job readiness training, medical and other evaluations and public transportation services.

As a result of the agency's assistance, Mr. Daniels has been able to obtain and retain a job working as a grounds maintenance worker at Arby's on N. Slappey Dr. in Albany. He works in this capacity three days a week, for a total of 8-10 hours a week.

Mr. Daniels' responsibilities include picking up the parking lot to ensure its cleanliness as well as unloading the truck and putting the food supplies in the cooler. He also cleans windows and performs various minor maintenance jobs.

As for Mr. Daniels' feelings about working at this restaurant, he enjoys it, and thinks a lot

of his boss. He has been working at this location since this past February.

Concerning Mr. Daniels' sentiments about Ms. Hudson and VR, he felt they were "very friendly and very helpful." Pointing out that the staff was very good at listening to his concerns, he said he would gladly recommend GVRA to anyone who has a disability and is seeking employment.

Victoria Towery also sought services from VR because she was experiencing work-related problems. Thanks to the assistance of her counselor, Lynda Lovett, CRC, she was provided with several services to help her fill her employment needs. For instance, GVRA assisted with the purchase of hearing aids with associated dispensing fees and ear molds. Also, an AWT technologist visited her worksite and provided recommendations for accommodations to aid her on the job.

VR even assisted with the purchase of these items, which included a hearing aid dryer, alarm clock with vibrating wristband and a pocket talker personal amplifier.

Thanks to VR's involvement, Ms. Towery was able to obtain gainful employment at 7 Hills Transport.

This facility is located in Cartersville.



In the Spotlight

Employment Services Member Hits the Books

By Employment Services Manager Crystal Bennett

With a smile as bright as Kimbley Allen's, there is no way that you can miss her warm personality around GVRA. Originally from Statesboro, Kimbley has always wanted to be a steward for individuals with disabilities. Her first job was working in mental health, specifically with individuals with disabilities.

When asked, she will politely tell you that her ultimate goal is to have her own staffing agency one day, and she recognized that in order to achieve that dream, she'd need more education.

So when this single mother of two girls (23, 17) finally had the opportunity to attend school, she jumped at the chance to grab hold of her future. Kimbley started working on her Bachelor's degree in 2016.

Upon graduation, she decided to go straight through to obtain her graduate degree. Kimbley's focus, intelligence and determination resulted in her being acknowledged on graduation day—when she earned a Master's in Business

Administration/Human Resource Management—for maintaining a 4.0 GPA and receiving induction into the Delta Mu Delta National Honors society. If you ever happen to be strolling around the Buckhead campus of American Intercontinental University, you might recognize a familiar face as Kimbley's picture is currently featured throughout the campus.

Through it all, Kimbley wanted to show her daughters that you can do anything that you set your mind to do and that "no matter what age you are, you should never stop learning because the more you learn, the more you can achieve."

Employment Services is proud of Kimbley and her accomplishments, and we are honored to work with her, as we all strive to help candidates obtain and retain sustainable employment.



Lead On

Leadership Summit Rescheduled

After working closely with the Savannah Westin, we have secured Monday, November 26th – Wednesday, November 28th as the rescheduled dates for the 2018 GVRA Leadership Summit. I am pleased that we were able to act in the best interest of our coworkers during the threat of dangerous weather and postpone our conference without significant financial penalty. I realize that travel immediately following a holiday may be less than ideal. However, the only other window during which the hotel offered availability was the week before Christmas, and I understand the burden of this timing would have been an even greater imposition. Out of

consideration for possible heavy weekend traffic, conference functions will not begin until lunch Monday. While rooms will be available for everyone Sunday night, we understand there may be some individuals who cannot travel Sunday.

The attendance list for the summit remains the same, and participants will be eligible for professional development credits as originally planned. An electronic registration will follow soon. Please ensure you register in a timely manner. You must make separate plans for transportation.

Executive Director Sean T. Casey

Dog Days

RWS Horticulture Students Get Creative



The Horticulture students, Trevon Morris, Tanner Dunlop, Charles Muller and Christopher Mason, had the privilege and experience of stuffing, planting and growing the topiary 'Hairy Dawg' for Callaway Gardens. Hairy Dawg and three other SEC mascots can be seen on display at the Mountain Creek Inn, Pine Mountain.



Embracing Pre-ETS

Transitioning to a Brighter Future

By Team Lead Janice Withrow

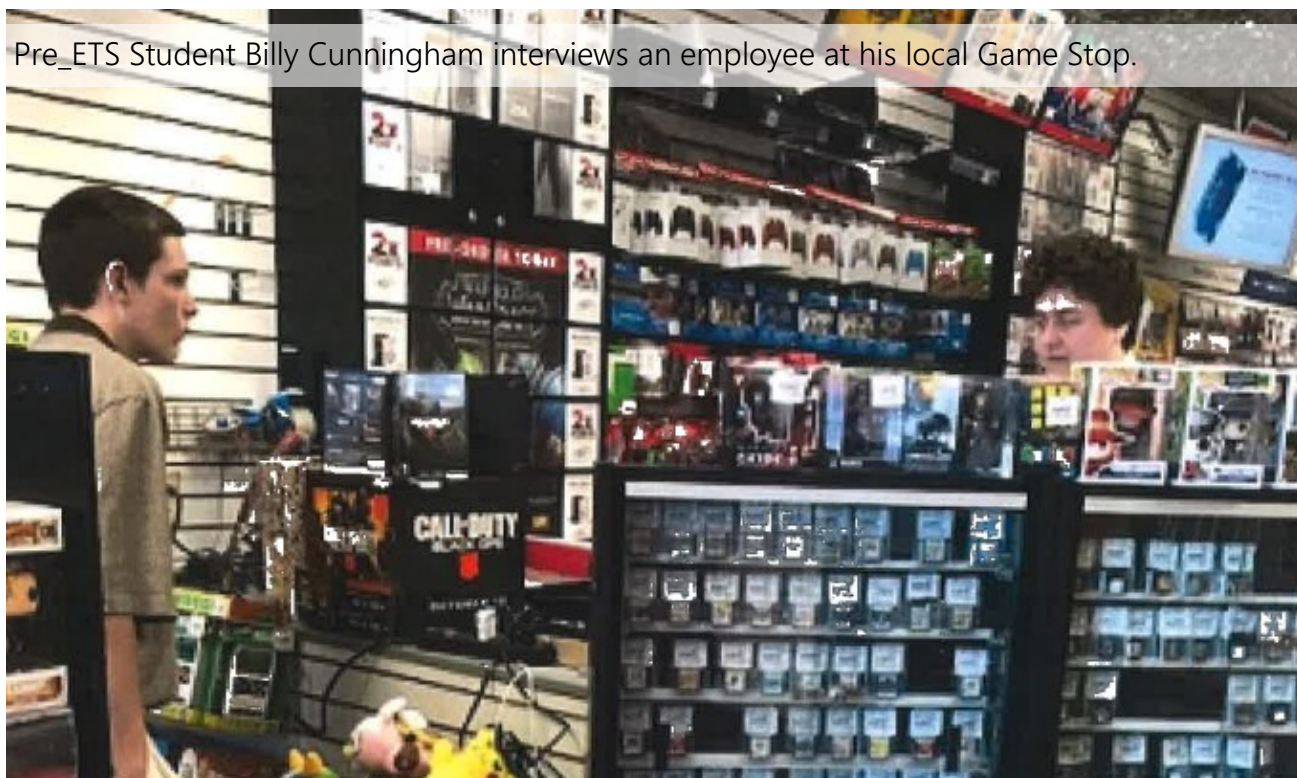
In early 2018, the Griffin VR office staff extended transition programming to embrace pre-employment transition (Pre-ETS) services in its five-county area, on the whole serving a population from seven total high schools. Services were provided to 65 students in Upson County and an additional 58 students from schools in Lamar, Spalding, Butts and Pike counties. Introduction to Pre-ETS services and coordination with local schools was supported by E3 career pathways specialists.

One particular service rendered was that of employment and training supports to Georgia Network for Education and Therapeutic Support students enrolled at the Mainstay Academy in Griffin. Onsite Pre-ETS services addressed and continue to provide the students with vocational exploration while they simultaneously continue to achieve their academic goals.

This past year and continuing through the summer, eight students took advantage of VR-sponsored virtual job shadowing, which helped them with self advocacy and work-based learning activities. VR staff supported and worked with local school staff to help these students maximize their potential for success.

The provider working with Mainstay Academy students (*Success is Our Plan LLC*), implemented career orientation and exploration services. This was done in conjunction with teachers, school administrators and social workers, in conjunction with students, their teachers and their families.

Thanks to everyone who made this program a success!



DAS Employee of the Month

Congratulations!

Nomination Submitted by Niki Skrine

Is it my pleasure to nominate Karen Johnson for Employee of the Month.

Ms. Johnson has been an employee with DAS since 2006. She is an adjudicator in the Athens Branch Office/Unit 01. Ms. Johnson consistently provides excellent customer service and exemplifies a strong work ethic. She also was a participant in a meet and greet with SSA employees in the Athens office in order continue to build great relationships that will benefit us all.

According to our local SSA district manager, she has reached out to her on several occasions to obtain function reports/work reports before considering a claimant's case. Ms. Johnson has also contacted her with a question that ultimately resulted in a more favorable decision for the claimant.

Moreover, Ms. Johnson has received regular kudos on the outstanding work related to the processing of her claims.

Lastly, she recently received positive feedback from one of her coworkers after contacting a claimant to remind them of an upcoming deadline. The claimant said she really appreciates Ms. Johnson's professionalism and consideration while moving through this review. She said Ms. Johnson had worked with her before and she knows she is in great hands; she actually said that Ms. Johnson has been "extraordinary" while helping her and her son move through this review process. She shared with me her belief that Ms. Johnson is an excellent adjudicator and expressed confidence in her son's review process and Ms. Johnson's skill.

Thank you, Ms. Johnson, for your strong commitment to provide the best customer service to the citizens of Georgia!



GLASS (Open) House

Libraries Becoming More Accessible

By Assistant Director of Blind Services Shirley Robinson

Mrs. Sandra Deal, the First Lady of Georgia, was the featured speaker at the Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) open house on September 20th, 2018. In attendance were GVRA staff Shirley Robinson, Assistant Director of Blind Services, and Kay McGill, Program Manager of Project Independence. Mrs. Deal thanked the library for having services available for people with print disabilities and shared her own love of reading.

Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) supports accessible library services in Georgia by promoting the use of assistive technology and by providing accessible reading materials to those who,

due to a disability, are unable to read standard print. Eligibility applies to anyone who is unable to read or handle standard printed materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical disability, persons who are legally blind or cannot see well enough or focus long enough to read standard print, persons who are unable to hold or turn pages of print books and persons who are certified by a medical doctor as having a reading disability.

GLASS offers a variety of reading, technology and peer support programs and services. They can be reached at 404-657-1452.



From left: Shirley Robinson with First Lady Sandra Deal and Kay McGill at the recent GLASS event.



Seeing the Sign

GVRA Partners with ASL News Network

GVRA recently began partnering with Sign 1 News, the first and only digital network, partnered with world news leader CNN, to offer on-line news and information in American Sign Language.

Started by acclaimed journalist and Emmy-winner Karen Graham, as a resource for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, the network now broadcasts daily on multiple online streaming services, and its app is available in both the IOS and Android stores. While only a year old, Sign 1 News already boasts thousands of regular viewers, and more growth will surely come, Graham said, because it is filling a void for certain populations.

"I wanted to do for the deaf community what a lot of people take for granted," Graham said. "It's empowering. It's empowering to have the *option* to know, and before us, there wasn't that option."

In the coming weeks and months, Sign 1 News plans to employ GVRA clients as interns, growing their skillset in the world of journalism and giving them a stepping stone into the media industry.

"It's going to start one person at a time. It's going to take great talent, and GVRA is tapped into that," she said. "We're excited about where this will lead."



Let's Chat

Community Conversations in Atlanta

GVRA staff—along with partners and advocates—gathered in Atlanta at AMAC at Georgia Tech in early October to discuss the benefits of hiring individuals with disability and the need to educate employers and the public at large about these benefits.

A big piece of the puzzle when it comes to educate is combatting premade assumptions, said Susanna Miller Raines with Georgia State University.

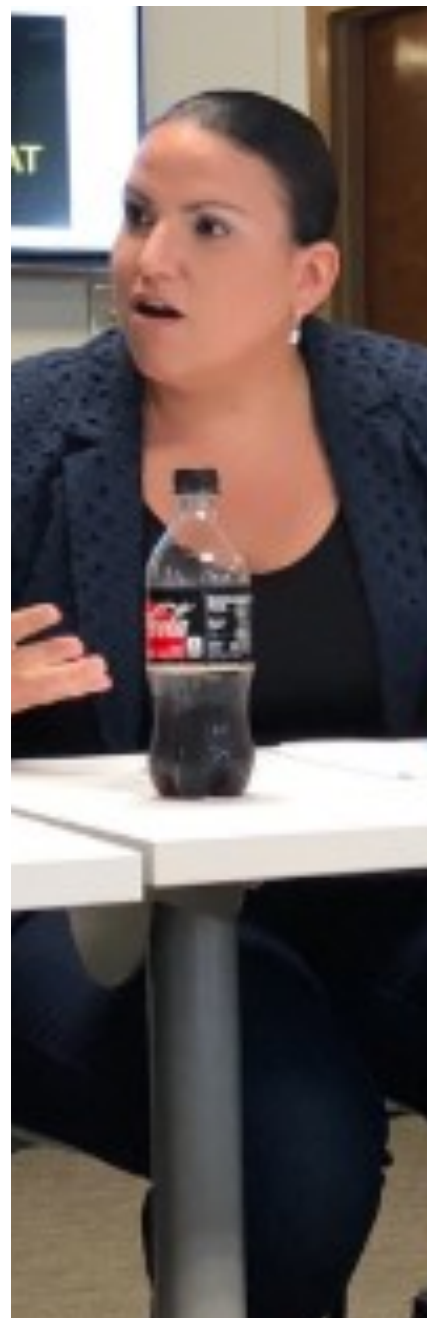
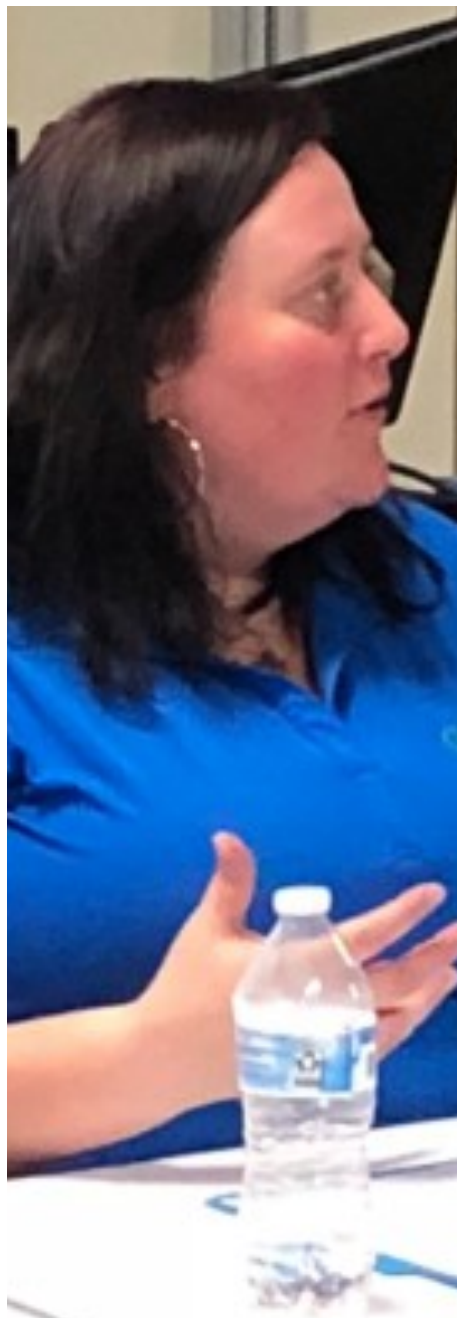
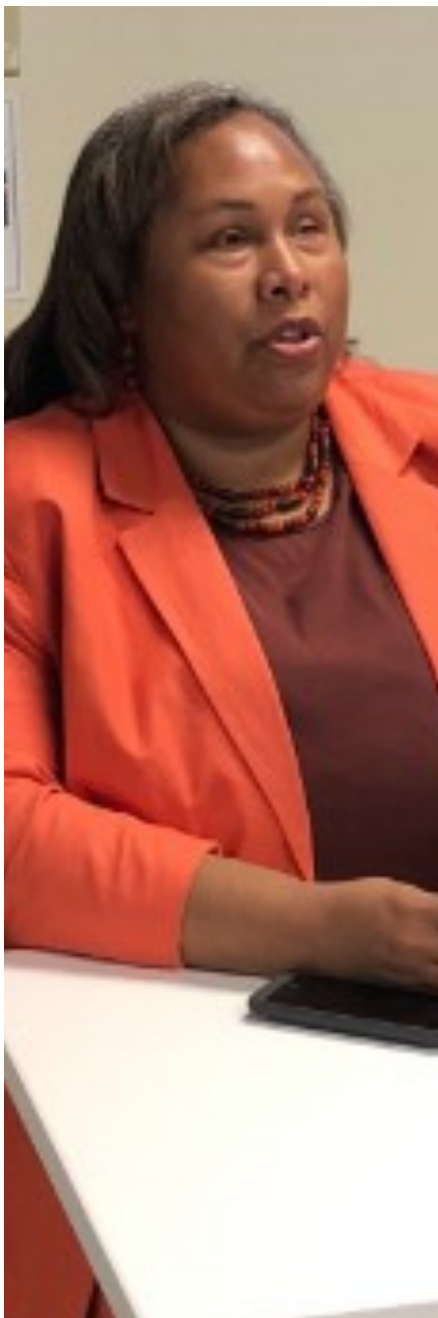
"Sometimes people don't know what they don't know, so they jump on stereotypes. You have to be the solution," she said.

As it stands now, the message is slowly spreading, said Zac Bradley with the Georgia Advocacy Office. Even then, he said, there's still work to do.

"Sometimes in job postings you see 'Minorities are encouraged to apply.' That's wonderful," he said. "The same should be true for those with disabilities."

Ultimately, said Rossany Rios with the Technical College System of Georgia, individuals with disabilities can do the job. They just need to first be given the chance.





From left: Empish Thomas, Susanna Miller Raines and Rossany Rios speak at a recent Community Conversations event in Atlanta.



Swearing In New GVRS Board Member is Official

By Communications Manager John Peyton Boan

Craig Camuso was sworn in recently as the newest member of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRS) Board.

Camuso is the regional vice president for state government affairs at CSX Transportation in Atlanta and brings a business perspective to the board, which is legislatively established and comprised of nine members.

"Craig brings a welcome employer perspective to the table," said Tom Wilson, GVRS Board Chairman. "The vocational rehabilitation world is already well represented by smart, passionate leaders in our field. Now we have added the next piece, with someone who has earned great respect across the Georgia workforce development system."

Camuso himself said he is optimistic about where GVRA is headed, and as a member of leadership at CSX, he hopes to bridge the gap between GVRA clients and the business community at large.

"I hope to help bring greater awareness to the business community of the fantastic services offered by the Agency. With workforce development such an important part of the state's growing economy, there is all kinds of potential for GVRA to be a key contributor to businesses throughout Georgia."

Camuso he thinks about the disability community more as the "ability community," as those with disabilities have many skills and much to offer potential employers.

He has coached softball and basketball through the Special Olympics in Gwinnett

County, and in doing so, he said he has learned so much from the young people participating.

"I started out participating because I wanted to help out, but I quickly realized that these athletes are instead helping me," he said. "Their competitiveness and desire to succeed is no different than any other athlete who takes a field."

In addition to his position at CSX, Camuso sits on the board of directors for the Georgia Railroad Association and the honorary board for Special Olympics Georgia. He is also a graduate of Leadership Georgia, has served on its board of trustees and is a current member of the board of governors for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

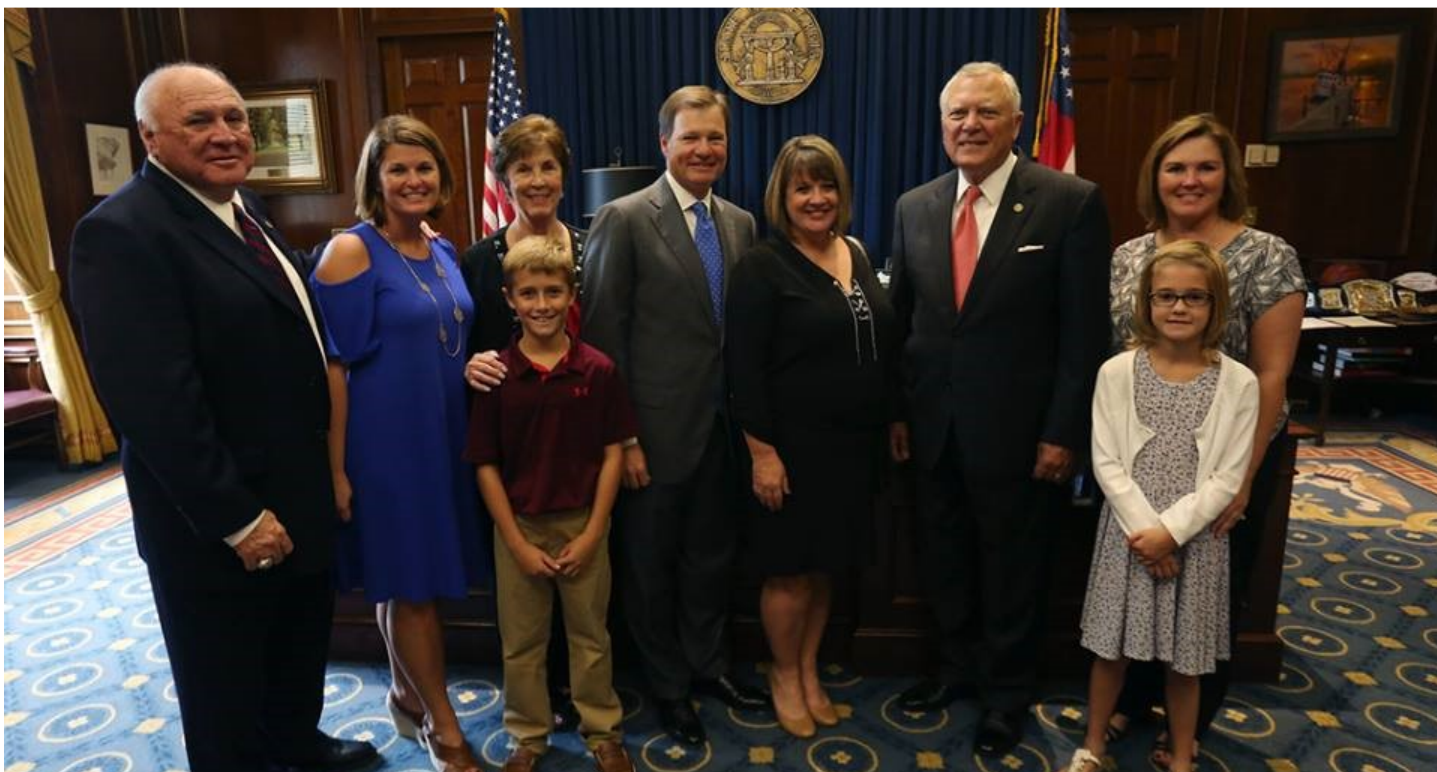
"Craig's experience touches a lot of sectors where we want to do good work," said Sean T. Casey, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) Executive Director. "He knows business; he knows legislative processes; he knows the disability community. I am thrilled to have his guidance and input."

Camuso earned a Bachelor of Journalism degree from the Grady College of Journalism at the University of Georgia. He and his wife, Kim, have two children and live in Lawrenceville.

Pictures from the swearing in are featured on the following page.



In early October, new Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services board member Craig Camuso was sworn in by Governor Nathan Deal. Below he is pictured with his family and the Governor.



www.gvs.ga.gov

 [Twitter.com/gavocrehab](https://twitter.com/gavocrehab)

 [Facebook.com/gavocrehab](https://facebook.com/gavocrehab)

Printed at Roosevelt Warm Springs

